

# CODE OF CONDUCT FOR STAFF, GOVERNORS AND VOLUNTEERS

Please read the following and sign on the last page. If you require any clarification please ask the Child Protection Officer (currently Alison Davies).

## 1.0 PREAMBLE

1.1 This document is intended to assist staff and volunteers to minimise the risk of being accused of improper conduct towards the young people with whom they come into contact during their work. The purpose of the Code is two-fold:

- It aims to safeguard and promote the welfare of young people and protect them from potentially damaging behaviour, and
- It aims to protect the person in a position of trust by preventing him/her from behaving inappropriately or entering into such a relationship deliberately or accidentally by providing guidance of what behaviour is acceptable.

1.2 It would be impossible and inappropriate to lay down hard and fast rules to cover all the circumstances in which staff relate to pupils and where opportunities for their conduct to be misconstrued might occur. Staff must exercise professional judgement in their dealings with pupils. For the vast majority of staff this code will serve only to confirm what has always been their practice. If staff have any doubts and the advice contained in this document they should consult the Principal or seek advice from their trade union.

1.3 From time to time, however, it is advisable for all staff to reappraise their teaching styles, relationships with pupils and their manner and approach to individual pupils, to ensure that they give no grounds for any doubts in the minds of colleagues, pupils or parents.

1.4 A relationship of trust, for the purpose of their document, is one where a member of staff, volunteer or Governor is in a position of power or influence over a pupil by virtue of the work or nature of the activity being undertaken.

1.5 Failure by staff to comply with this Code of Conduct may lead to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

## 2.0 SCOPE OF THIS DOCUMENT

2.1 This Code of Conduct applies to all staff within the school's complement, volunteers and Governors.

## 3.0 INTRODUCTION

3.1 Any person whose work brings them into contact with young persons is in a **position of trust** and needs to be clear about what kind of behaviour is acceptable and that which is not.

3.2 Child abuse may be physical, emotional, sexual or as a result of neglect. Whilst child abusers may be relatives or friends of the family, some meet children in schools as teachers or support staff or through their voluntary involvement in school activities. Pupils should not feel inhibited from reporting abuse against them by staff or volunteers, or any incident where a pupil has grounds to believe that a member of staff has crossed the boundary of acceptable behaviour. The Principal and staff will continue to do all they can to ensure that the environment within the school encourages pupils and staff to make truthful reports of any inappropriate behaviour.

3.3 The action to be taken by staff when they suspect a pupil is being abused by a person outside or inside the school, and the steps that should be taken in an allegation of abuse is made against a member of staff by a pupil, are set out in the school's child protection procedure and

all staff should be familiar with that.

- 3.4** Staff should also be familiar with the school's policies about physical contact with pupils, the use of reasonable force to control or restrain pupils and the procedures that should be followed if a pupil needs first aid or medical attention.

## **4.0 GUIDELINES ON CONDUCT**

### **4.1 Private Meetings with Pupils**

- 4.1.1** Staff and volunteers should be aware that private meetings with individual pupils may give rise to concern. There will be occasions when a confidential interview or a one-to-one meeting is necessary, but, where possible, such interviews should be conducted within school hours in a room with visual access, or with the door open, or in a room or area which is likely to be frequented by other people, and another pupil or adult should be present nearby. Where such conditions cannot apply, staff should ensure that another adult knows that the interview is taking place.

- 4.1.2** Meetings with pupils away from the school premises should only be arranged with the specific approval from the Head of Senior School or Principal and, where applicable, the pupil's parent(s), a record of this approval should be kept on the pupil's file.

### **4.2 Physical Contact with Pupils**

- 4.2.1** Physical contact may be misconstrued by a pupil, parent or observer. Touching pupils, including well intentioned informal and formal gestures such as putting a hand on a shoulder or arm, can if repeated regularly, lead to serious questions being raised. As a general principle staff must not make gratuitous physical contact with pupils. It is particularly unwise to attribute touching to their teaching style or as a way of relating to pupils.

- 4.2.2** Any form of physical punishment of pupils is unlawful as is any form of physical response to misbehaviour unless it is by way of restraint. It is particularly important that staff understand this both to protect their own position and overall reputation of the school.

### **4.3 Where Physical Contact may be acceptable**

- 4.3.1** There may be occasions where a distressed pupil needs comfort and reassurance which may include physical comforting such as a caring parent would give. Staff should use their discretion in such cases to ensure that what is, and what is seen to be by others present, normal and natural does not become unnecessary and unjustified contact, particularly with the same pupil over a period of time. Where a member of staff has a particular concern about the need to provide this type of care and reassurance he/she should seek the advice of the Principal.

- 4.3.2** Some staff are likely to come into physical contact with pupils from time to time in the course of their duties. Examples include showing a pupil how to use a piece of apparatus or equipment; demonstrating a move or exercise during games or PE. Staff should be aware of the limits within which such contact should properly take place and the possibility of such contact being misinterpreted.

- 4.3.3** There may be occasions where it is necessary for staff to restrain a pupil physically to prevent him/her from inflicting injury to others or self-injury, damaging property, or causing disruption. In such cases only the minimum force necessary may be used and any action taken must be to control/restrain the pupil in accordance with the school's policy. Where an employee has taken action to physically to restrain a pupil he/she should make a written report of the incident in the

form prescribed by the school's policy on restraint. Only employees who have received appropriate training in the use of force to control or restrain pupils should undertake such actions unless it is essential to avoid serious injury.

#### **4.4 Caring for pupils with particular problems**

**4.4.1** Staff who have to administer first aid should ensure wherever possible that other children or another adult are present if they are in doubt as to whether necessary physical contact could be misconstrued.

#### **4.5 Relationships and Attitudes**

**4.5.1** All staff should clearly understand the need to maintain appropriate boundaries in their dealings with pupils. Intimate or sexual relationships between staff and pupils will be regarded as a grave breach of trust, and any sexual activity between a member of staff and a pupil under 18 years of age may be a criminal offence in accordance with the Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act 2000.

**4.5.2** All staff should ensure that their relationships with pupils are appropriate to the age and gender of the pupils, and take care that their language or conduct does not give rise to comment or speculation. Attitudes, demeanour and language all require care and thought, particularly when members of staff or either sex are dealing with adolescent students.

**4.5.3** From time to time staff may encounter pupils who display attention seeking behaviour or profess to be attracted to them. Staff should aim to deal with those situations sensitively and appropriately but must ensure that their behaviour cannot be misinterpreted. In these circumstances, the member of staff should also ensure that the Principal or a senior colleague is aware of the situation and the action to be taken is recorded on the pupil's file.

#### **4.6 Where conversation of a sensitive nature may be appropriate**

**4.6.1** Many staff have a pastoral responsibility for pupils and in order to fulfil that role effectively there will be occasions where conversations will cover particularly sensitive issues. Staff must, in these circumstances, use their discretion to ensure that, for example, any probing details cannot be construed as unjustified intrusion.

**4.6.2** Other staff in school, may from time to time, be approached by pupils for advice. Pupils may also appear distressed and staff may feel the need to ask if all is well. In such cases staff must judge whether it is appropriate for them to offer counselling and advice or whether to refer the pupil to another member of staff with acknowledged pastoral responsibility for the particular pupil.

#### **4.7 Inappropriate comments and discussions with pupils**

**4.7.1** As with physical content, comments by staff to pupils, either individually or in groups can be misconstrued. As a general principle therefore staff must not make unnecessary comments to and/or about pupils which could be construed to have a sexual connotation. It is also unacceptable for staff to introduce or encourage debate amongst pupils in class, or elsewhere which could be construed as having a sexual connotation that is unnecessary given the context of the lesson, or the circumstances. At the same time it is recognised that a topic raised by a pupil is best addressed rather than ignored.

**4.7.2** Systematic use of insensitive, disparaging or sarcastic comments are also unacceptable.

## **4.8 Use of personal material**

- 4.8.1** Videos and/or photographic images of pupils must not be taken without prior agreement from the Principal and written consent from the pupil's parent/guardian. Copies of such images or any personal data relating to a pupil may not be passed on to a third party without prior written consent from the pupil's parent/guardian. Please seek clarification from school office as to which students have/have not agreed to videos and/or photographic images.

## **4.9 Contact with students by electronic messaging, text or mobile phone**

- 4.9.1** Communication beyond that necessary to perform duties as described in individual job descriptions is inappropriate and any breach of this is a disciplinary matter. Contacting a student by text, mobile phone, email, social networking site(s) (e.g. Facebook) or other written methods is inappropriate. No member of staff should have an individual student's email or phone number. There may be times related to school work when it is necessary for a member of the academic or boarding staff to phone a student, this must only be done with specific permission from a member of SMT.

## **4.10 Extra-curricular activities**

- 4.10.1** Staff should be particularly careful when supervising pupils in extra curricular activities or a residential setting such as a ski course, outdoor education camp or extended visit away from home. Typically a less formal approach than usual is appropriate in these settings, but that can be open to misinterpretation. Although a more informal approach is usual in such circumstances, the standard of behaviour expected of staff will be no different from the behaviour expected within school.

- 4.10.2** Staff should take care in receiving or giving gifts to pupils, which could be misunderstood. Gifts to individual pupils from staff will be exceptional and should be assessed against the school's policy or by a senior member of staff. In appropriate gifts from pupils should be reported as described in paragraph 4.11.

## **4.11 Reporting incidents**

- 4.11.1** Following any incident where a member of staff feels that his/her actions have been, or may be, misunderstood or misconstrued, or that circumstances arise such that an abuse of trust might be wrongly suspected by others, he/she should discuss the matter with the Principal. Where it is agreed with the Principal the member of staff should provide a written report of the incident. A detailed written report should always be made if a member of staff has been obliged to restrain a pupil physically, or where a complaint has been made by a pupil, parent or other adult.

- 4.11.2** If a member of staff is concerned that he/she might be developing a relationship with a pupil which could have the potential to represent an abuse of trust, the first advice must be to ensure that the relationship does not develop further. The Principal should be immediately advised of the concerns. Staff should take steps to minimise risk and to avoid situations which might be misconstrued. Contemporaneous recording and reporting the facts of the situation will assist in responding to any subsequent complaint.

- 4.11.3** A member of staff who needs advice about what might be a developing relationship should contact his/her trade union or professional association or the Principal.

- 4.11.4** If a member of staff is concerned that a pupil is becoming attracted to him/her or that there is a developing attachment or dependency, the member of staff must report the situation to the Principal and seek professional advice.

**4.11.5** If a member of staff is concerned about the apparent development of a relationship by another member of staff, or receives a report from a pupil about such a relationship, it is again important to immediately seek advice from the sources already described.

**4.12 Further action**

**4.12.1** Allegations of physical/sexual abuse, made against employees within the school will be dealt with objectively and reasonably in accordance with the Procedures for Dealing with the Allegations of Physical/Sexual Abuse in School (Ref: DfES 2044/2005)

***Acknowledgement: Bournemouth LEA***

I have read and understood the above document and will abide by its guidelines.

Name ..... Position .....

Signed ..... Date .....

[Revised: September 2009]